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CHINESE WORLD STRATEGY AND SOUTH ASIA: THE CHINA FACTOR IN INDO-PAKISTANI RELATIONS

Mohammad Habib Sidky

WHEN THE PAKISTANI ARMY under General Niazi surrendered unconditionally to the Indians in December 1971, the India-Pakistan War was officially terminated. As a direct outcome of the Pakistani defeat East Pakistan gained its independence and 75,000,000 people found themselves with an independent, sovereign nation of their own—the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The war itself had lasted for only twelve days, a period during which the armies of India surprised the world when, with creative military organization and strategy, they expeditiously vanquished a formidable enemy in a vigorous operation which was described as “an achievement reminiscent of the German *blitzkrieg* across France in 1940.”¹

The war and the resultant emergence of a new Asian state was not only the most important event to transpire in South Asia since the inception of Pakistan, but it had a profound impact upon the sensitive arena of international affairs as well. Moreover, beyond the general regional ramifications of the developments born out of the clash between two Third World nations, the individual global strategies of the great contemporary international powers, namely, the United States, the Soviet Union, and the People's Republic of China (PRC), were by no means left unaffected.

The war between India and Pakistan in 1971 was cause for much concern on the part of the Government of the PRC, which for most of the 1960s had nursed a steadily growing friendship with Pakistan while, for a number of reasons, China-India relations subsequent to the 1962 border flare-up between the latter two powers had undergone a process of virtual deterioration and collapse. By mid-1971, the future of the Indian subcontinent was at stake. The East Pakistan crisis which so violently culminated in the India-Pakistan War was a matter which

¹ *The Sunday Times*, London, December 22 1971.

no nation could ignore, especially with regard to foreign policy considerations. Deeply involved in South Asia in one way or another throughout the preceding decade, China was swift in revealing its stand on the issue and, as in the case of the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965, the PRC had once again come forth in support of the Pakistani position.

In 1971, however, the situation was somewhat different. The East Pakistan crisis, it seems, clearly carried with it a number of questions of important international consequence: alien intervention, military aggression, separatism, the controversy over the Bangladesh movement as a struggle for national liberation, etc. Issues such as these had a notable impact on the formulation, operation, extent and nature of Chinese policy in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani dispute.

Since the reappearance of the PRC in the arena of international diplomacy following the turbulent period of isolation from world affairs known as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, China has emerged as an important factor in the India-Pakistan dialogue. More important, Peking's attitude towards the developments in South Asia in the 1970s reveals the essence of Chinese world strategy, a strategy which may very well affect the political destinies of millions of people throughout the world.

The China-India-Pakistan Triangle, 1960–1970

The very cordial relations which had existed between the governments of the PRC and India for most of the 1950s based on the famous "Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence" underwent a process of rapid deterioration, and by 1959 it had become quite obvious that a state of hostility and estrangement was to become the dominant motif of Sino-Indian relations for quite some time to come.

An assortment of developments and issues were responsible for the intense amplification of Sino-Indian differences in the late 1950s and early 1960s: (1) Indian sympathies in the matter of Tibetan autonomy and the granting of asylum to the fleeing Dalai Lama, his government and thousands of followers; (2) the China-India boundary dispute, military friction and the resultant Chinese attack in the autumn of 1962; (3) Sino-Indian rivalry for leadership in the Third World; (4) closer relations and cooperation between India and the United States as well as improved Indo-Soviet relations; (5) the more recent appearance, in the words of one writer, of an "important difference of opinion regarding the proper basis for agreement and cooperation among the nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America—that is, Chinese sponsored anti-imperialism versus Indian-backed nonalignment."² Each of these and other factors no doubt played an important role in the

² Peter Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy, Peking's Support for Wars of National Liberation*, University of California Press, 1970, p. 223.

breakdown of harmonious diplomatic communication between Peking and New Delhi.

On the other hand, relations between China and Pakistan greatly improved during the decade of Ayub Khan's presidency (1959–1969). The ascension of Ayub Khan to power in Pakistan, as a direct outcome of a military coup d'état in October 1958, found Pakistan, which had been a vital part of political-military pacts, agreements and alliances (such as SEATO and CENTO), beginning to move away from the orbit of the Western world, especially the United States. With Ayub Khan came the normalization of Sino-Pakistani relations and the establishment of close ties with Peking based on a strong friendship constructed within the framework of the principles of Third World solidarity.³

Within a relatively brief span of time intense cooperation culminated in the consolidation of close relations between China and Pakistan. The signing of a border agreement in 1963⁴ commemorated the genesis of an era of mutual understanding and cooperation on all dimensions of Sino-Pakistani affairs—diplomatic, economic, cultural—a trend which to the greater extent persists into the 1970s. Such a relationship was augmented by a variety of significant factors. One of the most important elements in the evolution of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan is geographic proximity. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto wrote in 1969 that “China is Pakistan's neighbour and it is essential for us to maintain good relations with all our neighbours on the basis of friendship and equality.”⁵ Furthermore, China and Pakistan are not only contiguous to each other, they share India as a common hostile neighbor. China's moral and material support has clearly been a great asset to the Government of Pakistan in its policies towards India. For Peking, a close relationship with Pakistan provided the ideal counterbalance to the anti-Chinese feelings that had become prevalent in New Delhi throughout the 1960s.

Moreover, China's ideological differences with the Soviet Union and the U.S., amplified by the interests and influence of the two superpowers in Asia, presented itself as an incentive for working towards better Sino-Pakistani understanding. Soviet and American military assistance to India in the 1960s was cause for much alarm in both Pakistan and the PRC.⁶

³ Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters*, Oxford University Press, London, 1967, pp. 161–168. In this important autobiography, Ayub Khan, the main architect of Pakistan's foreign policy in the 1960s, presents an interesting discussion of the motivating factors behind the development of Pakistan's foreign relations during his presidency (see Chapters 9 and 10).

⁴ For the text of the Sino-Pakistani Boundary Agreement of 1963, see K. Sarwar Hasan (Ed.), *Documents on the Foreign Relations of Pakistan, the Kashmir Question*, Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, Karachi, 1966, pp. 384–388; see also *Peking Review*, 15 March 1963; and *Dawn*, Karachi, 3 March 1963.

⁵ Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *The Myth of Independence*, Oxford University Press, London, 1969, p. 131.

⁶ The President of Pakistan, Ayub Khan, expressed the Pakistani fear of U.S. military aid to India in an article entitled “The Pakistani-American Alliance,

Additionally, since Pakistan was quite active in the Third World "cause" and was also one of the most populous Muslim countries of the world in 1971, a China-Pakistan friendship held many possible advantages for the PRC in the pursuance of Maoist global objectives. Aside from ideological justifications, however, China's support for Pakistan was and is well within the interests of the Peking leadership from the pragmatic viewpoint. Under the present regional political configuration, the continued existence of an independent Pakistan is desirable to Peking in terms of China's territorial security calculations in proximate Chinese regions. Thus, within this context as well it would not be difficult to understand why the Chinese Government assured Pakistan of China's support for the safeguarding of Pakistani independence and integrity several times throughout the 1960s.

Pakistan in turn welcomed Chinese support with considerable gratitude. The relationship which evolved between the two governments caused much concern in India, where such developments were perceived by many as providing the basis for Sino-Pakistani collusion directed against Indian security and stability.⁷

Such then, in brief, were the major aspects of the China-India-Pakistan triangle in the decade preceding the outbreak of the 1971 India-Pakistan War. In 1971 the PRC's policy of support for the Pakistani position came at a time when Peking had reappeared upon the international diplomatic scene with a new view of the world. Indeed, one of the most important repercussions of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was in its impact upon the foreign relations of the PRC. China's behavior in the East Pakistan crisis and its attitude towards South Asia in the years following have revealed the essence of Chinese interest in that region as perceived in Peking.

China and the 1971 India-Pakistan War

Perhaps the most important official document relating to the nature of Peking's position in the East Pakistan crisis was Premier Chou En-lai's message to the Pakistani President, General Yahya Khan, in the second week of April 1971. The Premier's message, which for the first time officially disclosed the Chinese Government's attitude towards the explosive situation brewing in South Asia, came more than six months prior to the outbreak of the war itself. Chou En-lai's letter assured the Government of Pakistan of China's full support.

Stresses and Strains," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 2, New York, January 1964. Refer especially to pp. 202-208; Chinese leaders believed that American and Soviet involvement in India was in essence a joint effort directed against Peking.

⁷One Indian writer's observation is a good example of such sentiments: "Geographically, Pakistan and China are neighbours and together they can exert considerable military pressure on India. At some time or other in the future if there is a world conflagration, could not Pakistan hope with China's co-operation to seize Kashmir by force?" K. Rangaswami, "Motivations of the Pindi-Peking Axis," *The Hindu*, Madras, March 29, 1966.

An analysis of Chou En-lai's letter centers on several important points concerning Peking's official interpretation of events in East Pakistan at the time of the crisis. First, Chou En-lai stressed that the unification of the land and people of East and West Pakistan "are the basic guarantees" for the construction of a prosperous and strong Pakistani nation. Second, the Chinese Premier referred to the separatist movement in East Pakistan as "a handful of persons" whose desire was "to sabotage the unification of Pakistan." Having relegated the Bangladesh movement to the level of a hoodlum-type rebellion characterized by reactionism, Chou maintained that the "broad masses of people" had no leanings whatsoever in the direction of separatism. Third, Premier Chou En-lai charged in the second paragraph that the Indian Government was guilty of "gross interference" and exploitation of Pakistan's domestic affairs. Fourth, the Chinese leader accused the superpowers of meddling in the internal problems of Pakistan and of collusion with India in their joint effort to exploit the Third World. Fifth, the Chinese Government emphasized that it perceived the situation as a purely domestic, internal affair of Pakistan and as a problem which Pakistani leaders could solve without external interference. Sixth, Chou assured Pakistan of China's support in the event the "State sovereignty and national independence" of Pakistan might be threatened by the aggression of the Indian "expansionists."⁸

It is important to note, however, that from April until the outbreak of war in December, Chinese statements on the events in East Pakistan were most notable for their absence. Peking seemingly engaged in a policy of restraint vis-a-vis the East Pakistan developments by avoiding unnecessary comment until, under compulsion of the growing war crisis, there remained no other alternative but the voicing of strong verbal support for the Pakistani position. But what Peking did say during these months implied its tacit support for the Yahya Khan government's response to the crisis while denouncing Indian, Soviet, and American interference. On May 11, for instance, an editorial in *Jen-min Jih-pao* condemned Moscow and Washington for "working in close co-ordination with the Indian reactionaries to crudely interfere in the internal affairs of Pakistan" and stressed that "the relevant measures taken by President Yahya Khan in connection with the present situation in Pakistan are the internal affairs of Pakistan, in which no country should or has the right to interfere."

The conclusion of a Soviet-Indian treaty in August 1971 resulted in the augmentation of Russian shipments of military equipment to India, one of several developments which were cause for a great deal of alarm in Pakistan. While Soviet arms supplies to India increased, the U.S. had ordered a halt to all American shipments of military supplies and equipment to Pakistan on March 25, 1971, a dilemma which

⁸ For the text of Chou En-lai's letter to General Yahya Khan see *Dawn* (Karachi), April 13, 1971 and *The New York Times*, April 11, 1971, p. 26.

the Pakistanis protested would only further broaden the dangerous military imbalance in India's favor. Moreover, the massive Indian military build-up along the India-East Pakistan border sustained the tense atmosphere in Pakistan and was intensified by the aggrandizement of Indian-supported guerilla activities.⁹

Yahya Khan's decision to send a delegation to Peking in November under the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then, was only to be expected under the pressure of such circumstances. Pakistan was clearly in need of strong support, of the kind which Peking had furnished to a certain extent in the 1965 Indo-Pakistani clash. Acting Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei welcomed the Bhutto delegation with a reaffirmation of the Chinese position as had been outlined by Chou's earlier letter to Yahya Khan. In his speech, Chi Peng-fei stated that the secessionists were only a handful of persons while "the broad masses of Pakistan are patriotic and want to safeguard their national unity and oppose internal split and outside interference."¹⁰

Interestingly enough, Chi Peng-fei did not repeat Chou En-lai's earlier charge that the U.S. was in collusion with India, nor was any mention made of American imperialism. This, however, was in a sense hardly surprising since President Nixon was due to arrive in Peking within a few short months and a new phase of Sino-American relations was apparently on the verge of creation. The Acting Foreign Minister stated that China's precept was that issues of contention between nations should be resolved through negotiation rather than by force and violence. Although no solid agreements were reached at the end of the Bhutto delegation's visit to Peking, still China once again was reported by *Pakistani sources* to have promised support in the event of an Indian attack on Pakistan.¹¹

The India-Pakistan War officially began when the Indian Army crossed the international boundary into East Pakistan on December 3, 1971. China's declarations of support for Pakistan as well as its denunciation of Soviet-Indian collusion intensified throughout the ensuing period of Indo-Pakistani confrontation. Peking vehemently attacked the Soviet Union, accusing Moscow of supporting Indian "military provocation" and "subversive activities" towards the state of Pakistan.¹² Peking's accusations incessantly collated and drew parallels with India's position in 1971 to the latter's "subversive" activities in Kashmir and Tibet in the previous decade. The Soviet Union, on the

⁹ See, for example, "The Mukhti Fauj is Still Fighting," *The Economist*, London, July 10, 1971, p. 34; and "The Bengal Pressure Builds Up on Mrs. Gandhi," *The Economist*, July 17, 1971, p. 25.

¹⁰ For the text of Chi Peng-fei's speech see *Peking Review*, November 12, 1971, p. 5.

¹¹ On separate occasions prior to the war, Yahya and Bhutto had both spoken of the strong possibilities of Chinese armed intervention in response to an Indian attack of Pakistan. See *Dawn*, Karachi, November 13, 1971, and November 9, 1971.

¹² See NCNA commentary in *Dawn*, December 6, 1971.

other hand, was spoken of by Teng Hsiao-ping and other Chinese leaders as the power which occupied its "ally," Czechoslovakia, "and instigated the war to dismember Pakistan."¹³

The floor of the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council was quickly transformed into a hub of Chinese protest on behalf of Pakistan. Clearly, the harsh Sino-Soviet dialogue in the UN during the war blatantly displayed the significant influence of the by-now traditional Sino-Soviet dispute upon the PRC's support for Pakistan. The Soviet Union's recurrent use of its veto power in the U.N. while sedulously "encouraging New Delhi to occupy the territory of another State," was described as a tactic designed to allow the Indians the necessary time to present to the world a *fait accompli*, that is, an occupied East Pakistan.¹⁴

The immense dangers posed by the possible disintegration of a united Pakistan bolstered the Chinese condemnation of Moscow and Peking's stringent efforts to "expose" the Soviets and to debase Soviet prestige in the Third World. Thus, one of the obvious advantages of the India-Pakistan War for China was indeed along the lines of the Sino-Soviet dispute, for circumstances provided Peking with the opportunity to attack Soviet "social-imperialism" for the benefit of a massive international audience.

It would not be incorrect to suggest that one of the most important Chinese displays of support for Pakistan came in the form of a draft resolution by the Chinese representation at the UN, the contents of which consisted of a strong disapprobation and condemnation of "the Indian Government's acts of creating a so-called Bangla Desh and of subverting, dismembering, and committing aggression against Pakistan," a plea to all nations for the international support of the Pakistanis "in their just struggle to resist Indian aggression," and a mutual troop disengagement and withdrawal.¹⁵

Resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 7, 1971 and by the Security Council on December 21, 1971 called for an immediate end to the war and troop withdrawals on both sides.¹⁶ Although China voted for the resolutions, Huang Hua, the PRC representative to the Security Council expressed the displeasure of his country over the failure of the resolutions to make any note of Indian aggression and any call for the support of Pakistan.¹⁷

¹³ "Chairman of Delegation of People's Republic of China Teng Hsiao-ping's Speech at Special Session of U.N. General Assembly," *Peking Review*, Supplement to No. 15, April 12, 1974, p. 2.

¹⁴ *Le Monde* (English language edition), Paris, December 11, 1971, p. 13.

¹⁵ For the text of the draft resolution, see "Documents S/10421, China: Draft Resolution," *Security Council Official Records*, 26th Year, Supplement for October, November and December 1971, United Nations, New York, 1972, p. 92; also, *Peking Review*, December 10, 1971, p. 10.

¹⁶ See Resolution #307 in *Security Council Official Records*, op. cit.

¹⁷ For Huang Hua's speech to the Security Council, see *Peking Review*, December 10, 1971, pp. 7-8.

In Chinese policy Pakistan found all the verbal and moral support it needed and needless to say within this context Peking was very forthcoming, taking every opportunity to attack and criticize the Indians and the Soviets. China's final statement of support for Pakistan came on December 16, 1971, the day General Niazi surrendered to the Indians. A quick glance at the Chinese statement will readily reveal that Peking was not aware of the Pakistani surrender at the time it was issued. In any case, the statement was an extremely powerful attack on Indian-Soviet collusion:

The Soviet Government has played a shameful role in this war of aggression launched by India against Pakistan. The whole world has clearly seen that it is the back-stage manager of the Indian expansionists. For many years, the Soviet Government has energetically been fostering the Indian reactionaries and abetting India in its outward expansion.¹⁸

The Chinese position in this particular statement conformed to the greater extent with other official Chinese proclamations and declarations related to the issue in concern. Throughout the duration of the East Pakistan crisis and the ensuing war the theme remained the same. However, in the final statement the PRC for the first time recognized the existence of a serious refugee problem in East Pakistan:

As for the question of the return of the East Pakistan refugees to their homeland, it should, and can only, be settled by India and Pakistan through consultation, and it is absolutely unjustifiable to resort to force.¹⁹

Maintaining that Pakistan was willing "to seek a political solution to the East Pakistan question in a spirit of understanding and cooperation," China emphasized the importance of finding a settlement through negotiations rather than conflict. Bangladesh was described as a "puppet regime" which was "inserted into East Pakistan by armed force;" the Soviet Union was charged with increasing arms shipments to India in order to "bolster and pep up" the Indian aggression. The Chinese statement made note of Moscow's intention to convert India into a sub-superpower, to "further strengthen its control over India and thereby proceed to contend with the other superpower [i.e., the U.S.] for hegemony" in Asia, and characterized the Indian invasion as "precisely a repetition on the South Asian subcontinent of the 1968 Soviet invasion and occupation of Czechoslovakia." Furthermore, Peking went on to protest once more the Soviet conduct at the United Nations:

¹⁸ "Statement of the Government of the People's Republic of China, December 16, 1971," *Peking Review*, December 17, 1971.

¹⁹ Ibid. Neither Chi Peng-fei's speech to the Pakistani delegation in November nor Chou En-lai's message to Yahya Khan in the previous April made any reference to the existence of the refugee problem in East Pakistan.

What makes people particularly indignant is that the representative of the Soviet Government in the U.N. Security Council has time and again used the veto to obstruct the cease-fire and troop withdrawal which are desired by the overwhelming majority of countries and the people all over the world.²⁰

The most striking feature of the Chinese statement was that quite unlike previous statements, it openly referred to the question of material assistance for Pakistan:

The Chinese Government and people firmly support the Pakistan Government in their struggle against aggression, division, and subversion; we are not only doing this politically, but will continue to give them material assistance.²¹

Chou En-lai reacted to the fall of Dacca by stating that it was an event which marked the commencement of "endless strife" on the subcontinent and the beginning of India's ultimate defeat.²² Similar statements which followed reflected the consistency of China's attitude in spite of the changed situation on the subcontinent.

Such, then, was the general pattern of political and moral support for Pakistan to which China adhered in 1971. Chinese support was not circumscribed to mere verbal declarations—its material assistance to Pakistan was of significant consequence, especially in light of the discontinuance of American military shipments in March 1971. Given the diplomatic background of Sino-Pakistani relations the Chinese source clearly provided Pakistan with one politically logical alternative to the United States.²³

Apparently, a step-up in Chinese military aid to Pakistan started long before the war. In the period from 1966 until the outbreak of the East Pakistan crisis in 1971 China had served as a main source of arms for Pakistan.²⁴ British sources reported that prior to the Indian invasion over one hundred Chinese trucks per day were transporting military supplies to West Pakistan.²⁵ Moreover, a Pakistani military spokesman revealed in November 1971 that the PRC had dispatched 200 military instructors to Pakistan for the purpose of training Pakistani troops

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² *Peking Review*, December 24, 1971, p. 9.

²³ President Yahya Khan responded to a question on Chinese military assistance in this manner: "We will get all the weapons and ammunition we need, (every assistance, short of physical intervention). We get some things free and pay for others. But Chinese terms are so easy—25-year credit, interest free. Last year when I was in Peking I negotiated \$200 million worth of economic aid for our five-year plan with no interest." See "A Talk with Pakistan's President Yahya Khan," *Newsweek*, November 8, 1971, p. 53.

²⁴ According to American observers in Pakistan, in the five year period from 1961 to 1966, Peking had contributed over \$130 million worth of military equipment and supplies. See *United States Information Service News*, Karachi, February 9, 1972, p. 1.

²⁵ See *The Daily Telegraph*, London, April 28, 1971 and June 1, 1971; also, *The Guardian* (Editorial), Manchester, April 22, 1971.

for guerilla warfare.²⁶ According to another source, in the final week of the war China supplied Pakistan with in excess of 200,000 rounds of anti-aircraft and tank ammunition.²⁷ The Indian Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses at New Delhi has estimated free Chinese arms aid to Pakistan in 1971–72 to be comprised of infantry and artillery supplies for two army divisions, 225 T-59 tanks, one squadron of Il-28 bombers, 4 squadrons of MIG-19 interceptors, “an unspecified number of river-boats and coasters,” and Chinese assistance in the construction of two major ordnance factories.²⁸

The Post-War Period—China and South Asia Since 1971

It was puzzling for some who had observed the PRC's position in the 1971 India-Pakistan War to discern the rationale behind Peking's extension of moral and material support to Pakistan rather than to the Bangladesh movement. After all, was not China a self-proclaimed revolutionary power which had time and time again advocated revolutionary wars of liberation and had consistently pledged its support for oppressed peoples everywhere in their struggles for self-determination and independence? Why did China, therefore, contradict the very principles for which it stood by backing the Pakistani Government against the “war of liberation” raging in East Pakistan?

A quick review of Chinese statements and announcements of the period will immediately show that the Bangladesh movement failed to secure the endorsement of the PRC for the simple reason that Chinese leaders did not regard it as a “war of liberation” or as guerilla resistance by East Pakistani peasants and workers. Rather, in the words of Premier Chou En-lai, it was a separatist movement perpetrated by a small group of persons “who want to sabotage the unification of Pakistan.” The following paragraph from a statement issued by Peking best depicts the official Chinese perception of the nature of the war:

The Chinese Government and people consistently oppose imperialism, expansionism, colonialism and neo-colonialism and firmly support the people of all countries in their just struggle in defense of their state sovereignty and territorial integrity and against foreign aggression, subversion, interference, control and bullying. The war between India and Pakistan is a struggle between aggression and anti-aggression, between division and anti-division, between subversion and anti-subversion.²⁹

²⁶ *Dawn*, November 25, 1971, p. 1.

²⁷ *New Times*, No. 2, Moscow, January 1972, p. 10.

²⁸ See Major-General D. K. Palit, *The Lightning Campaign*, Thompson Press (India) Ltd., New Delhi, 1972, pp. 162–163.

²⁹ “Statement of the Government of the People's Republic of China, December 16, 1971,” *op. cit.*

Indeed, China-Pakistan relations had been built in principle upon the philosophy of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence and the ten tenets of Bandung. In Peking's view, the situation in East Pakistan was purely an internal affair which could only be resolved by the Government of Pakistan alone and did not warrant foreign interference. China repeatedly pressed for a diplomatic resolution of the problem and in accordance with the Five Principles demonstrated that, unlike India, the PRC would not interfere in the domestic affairs of Pakistan.

China's support for Pakistan was no doubt influenced to a considerable extent by the continuing Sino-Soviet dispute and past Sino-Indian problems. Evidently, Peking denounced the Bangladesh movement as a separatist uprising that was morally and materially encouraged and supported by an aggressive imperialist foreign power (India) which strived for the dismemberment of Pakistan. This in itself rendered any remote possibility for Peking's support of the secessionists in East Pakistan as inconceivable.

On pragmatic grounds, the emergence of a new sovereign state out of an old East Pakistan, a state which might be prone to succumb to a dominant Soviet influence, together with an expanding Soviet naval presence in the Indian ocean in 1971, constituted a significant potential threat to Chinese security, especially in the relevant frontier regions. The feasibility of such an environment probably entailed a notable impact on the formulation and operation of Chinese policy and action. One of the most important factors providing further incentive for the Chinese support of Pakistan was the signing of the Soviet-Indian treaty in August 1971, an agreement which was conducive to the intensification of Soviet military and economic assistance to India.

The provisional boundary agreement concluded between China and Pakistan in 1963 had defined a portion of the southern Chinese borders in the region near Kashmir. An Indian occupation of Kashmir would have raised once again the question of the Chinese frontiers. Reports from Soviet sources of Chinese troop movements along its southern borders³⁰ could perhaps be interpreted as a vestige of Chinese concern for the maintenance of its security in these regions. Within this context, then, Peking's support for Pakistan can be understood as well. That China had promised to intervene militarily if Kashmir was threatened, according to Pakistani representatives at the UN, provides further documentation for the support of such a line of argument.

Although China protested alleged border violations committed by Indian troops in two official notes to the Government of India,³¹ the warnings failed to bring any pressure on India and were not effective

³⁰ See, for example, *New Times*, Moscow, No. 52, December 1971, p. 9.

³¹ See the full text of the two notes of protest in *Peking Review*, December 24, 1971, p. 4 and December 31, 1971, p. 4.

whatsoever. These protests were untimely and considerably milder than Peking's well-timed, harsh remonstrance of 1965 which had threatened India with "grave consequences."³² Reemerging upon the international arena of diplomacy after a period of self-withdrawal from global affairs during the Cultural Revolution, China in 1971 was determined to move cautiously and along sure grounds as it adjusted to a changed global environment.

The support of the PRC for Pakistan in 1971, then, was of a somewhat limited nature. However, China did provide the Government of Pakistan with the moral support which, under the circumstances, was desperately needed. Not only did China act as a defender of Pakistan and work to rally world opinion for the latter, but it also provided, at least to a certain extent, material assistance which was vital at a time when other sources had become inaccessible.

The Afghanistan coup d'état led by Mohammad Daoud in July 1973 has been conducive to the development of a geopolitical configuration on the South Asian subcontinent the inevitable outcome of which appears to be no less than the further consolidation of Sino-Pakistani ties. With the new Afghan regime came the revival of the Afghanistan-Pakistan dispute over the tribal territories known as "Pashtunistan," and Kabul's charge that the Durand Line (the present frontier demarcation between the two states) is an illegitimate boundary not recognized by the Afghans. The Daoud government's alleged pro-Soviet inclinations and traditional Indo-Afghan political amity (stimulated by a common hostility towards Pakistan) has led to the emergence of what some observers define as the beginnings of a Moscow-Kabul-New Delhi axis. In light of Kabul's irredentist attitude towards its neighbor and the close Indo-Soviet alliance, the PRC has accordingly verbalized its support for Pakistan against external aggression on several occasions since the 1971 India-Pakistan War.³³ The fear of increasing Soviet influence over Afghanistan and India, Pakistan's two neighbors, especially since the Afghani coup, has no doubt been a crucial factor in bringing Pakistan and the PRC closer together in recent years.

From 1971 until the lifting of the American arms embargo to Pakistan in the spring of 1975, the PRC was the sole major source of military supplies for the exhausted Pakistani armed forces. In the period from the end of the war to the beginning of 1974 the PRC supplied Pakistan with close to \$300,000,000 worth of military equipment.³⁴

Subsequently, Peking has moved to rapidly augment the scope of

³² *Peking Review*, December 24, 1965, pp. 9-13.

³³ See, for example, Premier Chou En-lai's speech at a banquet given in honor of Madame Bhutto on February 20, 1973, *Peking Review*, February 23, 1973, p. 6; The Chinese Foreign Minister's remarks during his visit to Pakistan in June 1973, *ibid.*, June 29, 1973, p. 17; and the Chinese Representative's statement to the UN General Assembly on October 2, 1973, *ibid.*, October 5, 1973, p. 12.

³⁴ According to *The Washington Post*, January 21, 1974.

Sino-Pakistani relations. The mutual exchange of diplomatic, cultural, economic and military delegations at regular intervals is a reflection of intense desires on both sides favoring strong ties. Peking's interest in the economic development of Pakistan has been evidenced by significant Chinese participation in various developmental projects and a notable number of generous grants and loans to Pakistan. Moreover, Sino-Pakistani trade in the post-war period can be accurately described as flourishing and has led to increased Chinese involvement in Pakistan in the commercial dimension of affairs.

Conforming with its policy of support for Pakistan, China withheld recognition of the Mujib government and the new state of Bangladesh. The mid-August 1975 coup d'état in Bangladesh which resulted in the assassination of President Mujib and the collapse of his regime has brought about a drastic alteration in the diplomatic correlation of China-Pakistan-India affairs. The new regime in Bangladesh is reputed to be inclined in the direction of the West, quite unlike the Mujib government whose leanings were clearly pro-Indian and, to the irritation of Peking, profusely pro-Soviet.

China's reaction to the coup in Dacca was swift and predictable. Peking officially recognized the new regime with great expediency. On October 4, 1975, China and Bangladesh established diplomatic relations,³⁵ a development which Peking looks upon as a major Soviet setback in South Asia. A *Renmin Ribao* editorial of October 8, 1975, expressed China's perception of the situation on the subcontinent:

Recently the Governments of Bangladesh and Pakistan have, after friendly negotiations decided on the establishment of diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level between the two countries. We welcome the decision. We are convinced that the existence of a Bangladesh which firmly defends state sovereignty and national independence and pursues a genuinely non-aligned policy will surely be conducive to safeguarding peace and security in the South Asian subcontinent and in Asia.³⁶

In early 1976, a startling turn in Indian foreign policy may have been the initial stage of a significant shift in the international political configuration on the South Asian subcontinent. India's External Affairs Minister, Y. B. Chavan, disclosed in a report to parliament on April 15 that New Delhi had taken the initiative to propose the normalization of Sino-Indian ties. Announcing the appointment of K. R. Narayanan as India's Ambassador to Peking, Chavan stated that Peking had conveyed its agreement to the Indian Government and was expected to send an

³⁵ The agreement establishing diplomatic relations between the Bangladesh and the PRC was signed in New York by Chinese Foreign Minister Chiao Kuan-hua and Abu Sayeed, Foreign Minister of Bangladesh. See "China and Bangladesh Establish Diplomatic Relations," *Peking Review*, October 10, 1975, p. 5.

³⁶ For the text of the editorial see *Peking Review*, October 10, 1975.

Ambassador to New Delhi. Moreover, within four days of the announcement that diplomatic ties with the Chinese were being restored at the ambassadorial level in the immediate future, it was reported that Prime Minister Gandhi had indicated India's willingness to discuss the resumption of relations with Pakistan as well, an offer which Zulfikar Ali Bhutto hastily accepted. In a joint communique issued on May 14 after three days of negotiations, India and Pakistan agreed to resume diplomatic relations, severed in 1971 as a consequence of the war over Bangladesh, and to restore air and rail links, overflights, and overland traffic between the two countries.

Although New Delhi denied any direct connection between India's surprising new diplomatic offensive toward each of its two neighbors, Mrs. Gandhi's friendly overtures in the direction of Peking and Islamabad may have been designed to create a new mood of amity in Asia, reviving the image of India as an exponent of world harmony and peace and reestablishing New Delhi as a leader of the Third World.

The terms of the Sino-Indian "detente," however, were probably Peking's decision.³⁷ Consequently all this raises a number of questions of considerable importance for which time alone will provide answers. Was it a successful manifestation of the Chinese objective to effectively counter Soviet influence in Asia? On the other hand, the mending of fences between New Delhi and Peking could be useful to Mrs. Gandhi, in her new authoritarian role, in dealing with the numerous and pressing domestic difficulties which confront her in the wake of the internal political upheavals of 1975 that resulted in the imprisonment of thousands of her opponents. The existence of peaceful frontiers to the north and to the east would certainly be of significant value in any such efforts on the part of the Indian Government. Further, the desire to improve relations with China and Pakistan is clearly an indication of Mrs. Gandhi's determination to diversify her international ties, and signals India's own bid to display its independence from Moscow. It is not illogical to surmise that India's new attitude evoked Moscow's displeasure. The existence of the USSR as the only superpower maintaining close and friendly relations with India is, from the Soviet viewpoint, a far more favorable situation. The multilateral implications are indeed quite profound, possessing the potentiality to radically alter the political correlation in Asia as well as have a serious impact on the world balance of power.

On the bilateral level of affairs, the resumption of Sino-Indian and Indo-Pakistani ties may eventually lead to a series of new economic and

³⁷ On a number of occasions since 1969, India had made overtures to Peking for the normalization of relations. China's response had been to suggest that since it was India that had first withdrawn its ambassador in 1962, it should also be first in appointing an ambassador to Peking. This had not been acceptable to New Delhi which proposed, instead, a simultaneous exchange of ambassadors. The Indian decision in April 1976, thus, represented a concession to the Chinese position.

other relationships that could have important continental repercussions. In addition, an Indo-Pakistani thaw could prove to be an important factor in the strained India-Bangladesh ties, which even further deteriorated after the eruption of border clashes along the India-Bangladesh frontier in April, at a time when India was attempting to resolve its differences with its other neighbors.

At this premature stage of developments on the South Asian sub-continent a measure of caution should be used in attaching any great importance to India's exchange of ambassadors with China and Pakistan. Resolving the numerous problems between India and its neighbors will require a considerable amount of time and effort on the part of all the governments involved while the conditions for disputes concurrently prevail. Indeed, only a week prior to Chavan's announcement, the Indian Ministry of Defence's annual report to parliament warned that "the threat to India's security has not diminished and the situation warrants a close and continuous watch." The report, recalling a border incident in October 1975 in which Chinese troops allegedly entered Indian territory and killed four members of an Assam Rifles patrol on routine duty, expressed concern that China had assisted Pakistan in rebuilding the military losses incurred in the 1971 war and to increase Pakistani arms production capacity while increasing its own logistics and patrolling along the China-India border.³⁸

The 1971 India-Pakistan War meant more to Chinese leaders than a simple internal disruption in one state assisted by external interference on the part of its neighbor. Within the context of the ideology constant in Chinese foreign policy and within the framework of the Maoist revolutionary model, given the revised Chinese perception of the configuration of international political forces subsequent to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the setting for South Asia since 1971 has been one developed by the contradictions persistent between superpower imperialism and the Third World anti-imperialist struggle. Peking officially characterized Indian "aggression" during the 1971 war as a direct product of Soviet instigation.³⁹ In the Chinese view, then, the real enemy in the South Asian struggle is the Soviet Union. According to the doctrine of Mao Tse-tung, true victory can only be achieved with the elimination of the principal contradiction, in this case the USSR. By supporting Pakistan, China was in essence furthering its struggle against the imperialism of the most "vicious" of the two superpowers in the greater battle of exploited versus exploiter. This is the "rural areas" of the world fighting to eventually encircle the "cities" of the world.

Within such a framework of reality and dialectics, thus, Peking's

³⁸ See *The Overseas Hindustan Times*, April 15, 1976, p. 4.

³⁹ *Peking Review*, September 1, 1972, pp. 6-9, quoting a speech to the U.N. Security Council by the Chinese representative in August 1972.

support for the Government of Pakistan will no doubt continue for quite some time to come. China's policy of friendship with Pakistan and its perception of the situation on the South Asian subcontinent has been a classic application and expression of united front tactics, perhaps the most dominant theme of Chinese foreign strategy in the 1970s.

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